
Important Update on the County Budget

From Frank White <FWhite@jacksongov.org>

Date Tue 1/14/2025 3:40 PM

To Executive Distribution <ExecutiveDistribution@jacksongov.org>

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Veto Message - Ordinance 5902.pdf;

Dear Jackson County Associates,

I want to share an important update about the county's budget for the current fiscal year. As you know, the county's annual budget is the foundation we use to provide essential services, invest in our community, and keep the county running smoothly.

Unfortunately, I was forced to veto the budget recently passed by a simple majority of county legislators. This was not a decision I took lightly, but it was a necessary step to protect the interests of Jackson County residents and to ensure you have the resources needed to do your job. The changes made by this group of legislators would have seriously undermined our ability to deliver on our commitments by:

- Cutting millions of dollars from important department budgets that deliver essential services.
- Giving an excessive increase to the Legislature's budget, diverting funds away from other key priorities.
- Ignoring critical infrastructure and maintenance needs that are vital to our future.

Right now, the County Legislature isn't scheduled to meet again until **January 27, 2025**. Until they approve a new budget or override my veto with a supermajority, we will follow Missouri law, which allows us to use last year's budget to cover ongoing costs for operations and maintenance.

Moving Forward

To help with planning and operations, the **2024 budget will soon be uploaded** and available for your reference. Spending cannot exceed the amounts approved in 2024. For more information on the harmful budget amendments and the rationale behind my veto, a copy of my veto message is attached to this email.

If you have questions or concerns about how this affects your department or work, please contact your department director or the County Counselor's Office.

I want to assure you that I remain committed to working with the Legislature to agree on a responsible budget—one that reflects our values, supports your hard work, and prioritizes the needs of the people we serve.

Thank you for your patience, dedication, and resilience during this challenging time. Your efforts truly make a difference in the lives of those in our community.

Sincerely,

Frank White Jr.
County Executive
Jackson County



FRANK WHITE, JR.
Jackson County Executive

JAN 09 2025
JACKSON COUNTY CLERK

O# 5902

January 9, 2025

Budget Veto Message
Frank White, Jr., Jackson County Executive

To the Honorable Members of the Jackson County Legislature,

The budget is the most important document we create as leaders. It sets our priorities, shapes our future, and reflects our values as a community. Unfortunately, the amendments made to this budget betray those values, and I cannot in good conscience allow them to become law. These cuts, including over \$2 million from public safety and the loss of 60 critical corrections positions, jeopardize the safety and well-being of every resident.

1. Public Safety and Essential Services at Risk

This budget cuts **over \$2 million from public safety personnel**, including **60 positions in the Department of Corrections**, directly jeopardizing the safety and security of our communities. Over the past few years, we have worked tirelessly to rebuild this critical department, not just by planning a new jail, but by strengthening operations to ensure safety and professionalism. These cuts threaten to undo that progress and further strain an already understaffed department. Public safety is not a luxury—it is a promise we make to every resident, and it is one we must keep.

Beyond public safety, this budget eliminates **all arts funding**, depriving our community of programs that inspire creativity and enrich lives. It also defunds key positions in areas like **customer service for assessments**, creating delays and frustrations for taxpayers. Cuts like these will impact thousands of residents who rely on timely assistance every year. These are not strategic adjustments—they are short-sighted and harmful to the people we serve.

2. Harm to County Associates and Operations

The amendments defund multiple positions, forcing the **termination of hardworking county associates** who dedicate their lives to serving our residents. These individuals are not simply numbers on a ledger—they are the backbone of our government. Terminating these roles will weaken our ability to deliver the essential services that residents depend on every day.

Even more troubling, this budget seeks to restructure the government in a way that would **defund the entire budget office**, crippling our ability to plan, manage, and oversee county finances. The amendments also make such severe cuts to the **County Counselor's Office** that they would render it



Impossible for the office to fulfill its legal duties. What good is allocating funds for contractual legal services if a simple majority of the legislature refuses to award contracts unless they get to handpick who receives them? These changes are reckless, unsustainable, and undermine the very foundation of our government.

3. Legislative Overreach

The legislature has attempted to move county departments under its direct control, despite lacking the legal authority to do so. This overreach threatens the separation of powers and undermines the effective operation of our government. It sets a dangerous precedent that cannot stand.

Equally concerning, none of these amendments were publicly discussed or vetted with the departments they impact prior to being introduced. In fact, these sweeping changes were introduced and perfected on the same day, leaving no time for analysis or thoughtful deliberation. This lack of transparency is not just poor governance; it is a disservice to the people of Jackson County who expect accountability and open government.

4. Misaligned Priorities

While slashing critical services and public safety funding, this budget includes the largest increase in the legislature's budget in Jackson County history. Leadership is about putting the needs of others ahead of your own, not expanding your own office at the expense of the people you are supposed to serve.

This decision sends the wrong message to our residents. It says that their safety, their services, and their well-being are less important than bureaucratic growth. That is not the leadership our residents expect or deserve.

5. Legal and Fiscal Irresponsibility

This budget fails to meet the state's legal requirement for a comprehensive annual budget, leaving critical gaps that threaten our ability to govern effectively. The legislature's amendments introduce a pattern of legally questionable actions that expose the county to costly litigation and long-term financial instability. This is reckless, and it is unfair to the residents who trust us to be responsible stewards of their resources.

A Call for Collaboration

A budget is more than a financial plan — it is a reflection of our values. This budget, as amended, does not reflect the values of Jackson County. It prioritizes political gamesmanship over public safety, economic stability, and the well-being of our residents. As your County Executive, I cannot and will not accept a budget that fails to serve the people of Jackson County.

I urge this legislature to come back to the table and work with my administration to craft a budget that:

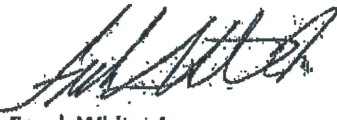
- Restores funding for public safety and essential services.
- Respects the separation of powers and adheres to legal requirements.
- Reflects the shared aspirations and priorities of the people we are privileged to serve.

Closing Statement

To the residents of Jackson County: you deserve better. You deserve a government that puts your safety, your services, and your future first. This budget does not meet that standard, and I cannot in good conscience sign it into law.

This veto is not the end of the process—it is a call to action. Let us use this moment to come together, set aside politics, and create a budget that moves Jackson County forward. Together, I know we can deliver the responsible, effective, and compassionate governance that every resident deserves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank White, Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Frank White, Jr.
Jackson County Executive